

MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society

REPORT

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Focus on Women and Leadership

In both the church and society there has been a scarcity of women in leadership positions. Generally men have been more prepared or socialized during childhood to develop and learn the necessary qualities to be leaders.

In the first article of this *Report*, Donna Froese notes that the qualities normally defined as leadership qualities are directly opposite those often defined as womanly qualities. Women have generally felt less confident about their leadership abilities. Most likely this hesitancy is a result of years of being told they are not meant to be leaders. But it is necessary for us to enlarge our view of what women can do, remembering that the task of all Christians is to do the will and work of God in the world. We must all exercise our gifts and that may mean becoming a leader.

The third article by Colleen Stagner, speaks to the issue of differences in perception between women and men concerning leadership. Again this can be traced to differences in socialization. Because there have been forces within society and within women's perceptions of self which cause women to limit their choices or views about leadership, women must now learn how to become leaders in their own right. They must learn how to solve problems, how to make decisions, how to be assertive, and how to be self-confident; these are all qualities necessary for potential leaders. By learning leadership skills and thus broadening their effectiveness, women will be better able to overcome resistance from those who have been opposed to women in leadership positions. The first and second articles

present some initial skills necessary for women interested in developing as leaders.

A key task for women involved in leadership development is to retain hope—to persevere through the risks of involvement. Katie Funk Wiebe recently shared with the Women's Fellowship of Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church that public speaking did not come easily to her; it was a skill she had to learn through trials and practice. She found she could only overcome shaky knees and fear by simply saying "yes" to speaking invitations. More and more women are saying yes, becoming skilled leaders, and being recognized. This progress is illustrated by the article by Sharon Heath reporting on the happenings of the General Conference Women's Caucus, and by the sharing of personal experiences of two Mennonite women who are leaders in their professions. We also gain encouragement and role models from books telling the stories of important women in our history (see Resources in this *Report*).

Many of us Mennonites, both men and women, struggle with the traditional definition of leadership as power and domination over others. A new definition of leadership is necessary—one which sees leadership not as power or superiority but as the skill to motivate and encourage others.—Rosie Epp

Rosie Epp compiled the feature material for this Report. She is a member of the MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society and assistant pastor of Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan.

Learning to Lead

by Donna M. Froese

Women who develop only their "womanly" and "feminine" qualities may well find it difficult to lead. Characteristics necessary in a leader, such as decision-making and problem-solving, are more generally considered "masculine" or "manly" qualities. Consequently, many women lack the confidence required of a leader.

The source of women's lack of confidence is our social values and definitions. Webster's Second Edition describes the "qualities proper or becoming to women" as (among others) gentleness, modesty and weakness. Other words used in the dictionary in association with "feminine" and "womanly" are timid, inferior, mild,

A feminist leader, like a mother, must empower her constituents by listening to them and by teaching them what she knows about getting things done....Good leaders do not break our spirits or leave us feeling like losers. Leaders, like mothers, should provide the conditions by which women can be free to make choices—disclosure of facts, goals, process.—Jackie St. Joan

pitiful and flexible. In contrast, the dictionary describes a leader as one who precedes and directs in some action, opinion, or movement. "To lead" is defined as "to direct in action with authority; to have direction or charge of; a going ahead in order to show the way, a taking of the initiative, to direct by influence"—not something a weak, timid and modest person is likely to do. To be decisive is to be, among other things, "firm, definite, clearcut, unhesitating and resolute." Gentle, mild and flexible do not fit into the list. The words used in the dictionary with "male" and "manly," on the other hand, seem to fit more closely with the definitions for "leader" and "decisive." Resoluteness, independence and forcefulness are, according to Webster, qualities becoming to a man. These characteristics are much more likely to be required of a leader.

Although our society teaches and encourages women to develop the qualities that are required of a follower, women who develop only the set of characteristics associated with "womanly," who are always followers and seldom leaders, do not gain an appreciation and respect for their own roles as followers nor for others who are in a leadership role. This lack of appreciation leads to an unrealistic perception of self and others. The end result is behavior that does not lead to the goals the person originally had, such as being flexible, obedient, supportive and cooperative!

If a person is always following, never taking the responsibility of making the final decision, she tends to lose confidence in herself and her ability to make decisions. She becomes hesitant and fearful of making decisions. If a person is always leading, always taking the responsibility of solving problems, she tends to be bossy and impatient with others, she loses confidence in the ability of others. She is too proud or does not trust the ability of others and finds it difficult to ask for help from anyone.

Both the leader and follower roles are necessary to healthy development of confidence in self and others. A follower develops the skill of obedience. However, with a loss of respect for her role, the obedient person becomes timid and spineless, always giving in. A follower learns appreciation and trust. But the follower who appreciates only others loses her perspective of her own value; she believes anyone and allows others to make all of her decisions. A follower learns to be critical. The criticism becomes destructive when it becomes bitter complaining.

A leader also can develop behaviors that do not lead to the results she wanted or intended when she loses her perspective of the skills required in both roles. A leader learns to give orders. Leadership, however, becomes ineffective when the leader becomes bossy and acts important. A leader develops self-respect. But the self-respecting leader can become snobbish and conceited. Also, the ability to take care of self in the extreme is cold and unfeeling.

Both roles, follower and leader, develop behaviors and gifts of value. The follower learns to be obedient, grateful, appreciative, cooperative, considerate and

supportive. The leader learns to give orders, to respect self, be independent, be strict when necessary and take the initiative. Dependency on one set of behaviors neglects the opposite set. We lose a realistic perspective of our own importance. Through experiencing both the follower and leader roles, women gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the value and difficulties of both roles.

Women learn the skill of being followers through their socialization early in life. Often they have to learn the skill of being a leader when they are adults. Many women need to develop confidence in their own judgment before they can try out the leadership role. There are several steps a woman can take to develop her confidence in being a leader. First, a woman should look realistically at the areas in which she has had practice being a leader. A woman is often in the role of leader when she is teaching children or when she is running her household. In these two areas she easily makes decisions and solves problems as they arise. A woman should recognize she possesses the gift of leadership even if the gift is underdeveloped.

Second, a woman can learn the techniques used to solve problems, and apply the techniques to areas in which she tends to rely on behaviors she is more comfortable with—such as allowing others to take the responsibility and doing what someone else says.

Third, a woman should practice decision-making techniques whenever she finds herself asking someone "What do you think I should do?" or when she feels overwhelmed by a problem or decision.

Here are two lists that I have found useful in helping women solve problems and make decisions:

Problem Solving

1. Statement of problem (Make the statement specific and concrete.)
2. What is being done to perpetuate the problem? (List six things.)
3. Outcome desired.
4. Solutions attempted in the past.
5. New alternatives that can be pursued.
6. What is required to attain goal?

Decision Making

1. Decision to be made.
2. Results you want.
3. Alternatives.
4. Outcomes, good and bad, that might occur with each alternative.
5. What you value in each outcome.
6. Action you will take.
7. When you will start.
8. When you will finish.

Donna M. Froese, 834 Gilman, Wichita, Kan., is a counselor with the Southeast Counseling Center in Wichita. She has led various workshops for women, including a career/life planning workshop which is aimed at women who are trying to make their lives more constructive and satisfying. She is active in the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church.

Understanding Assertive Behavior

by Sharon B. Molzen

"But I don't want to be pushy." "I don't want to be seen as aggressive."

These statements and others like them are common when a group of women get together to discuss assertiveness.

Assertiveness has been one of the major topics included in Women's Growth Groups, sponsored by the Harvey County Extension Service. The Women's Growth Groups are small discussion groups that provide women an opportunity to come together to share concerns, goals and to discuss issues affecting them. Assertiveness has been an important issue.

It may be just a long history of social conditioning or just our views about human relationships, but most of the women in the groups do not want to be considered aggressive, at almost any cost.

It's important to understand that aggressive behavior and assertive behavior are not the same. Before we can begin to be more assertive it's important to understand the differences between these two behaviors and to begin to understand the positive aspects of assertiveness. The first task then, is to define, for yourself, what assertive behavior is and how it is different from aggressive behavior. (Definitions for these terms we've used in the Women's Growth Groups are borrowed from an Assertiveness Training Task Force at the University of Kansas.)

Assertive behavior is that type of interpersonal behavior in which a person stands up for his/her legitimate rights in such a way that the rights of others are not violated. Assertive behavior is an honest, direct and appropriate expression of one's feelings, beliefs and opinions. It communicates respect for the other person, although not necessarily for that person's behavior.

Aggressive behavior is that type of interpersonal behavior in which a person stands up for his/her own rights in such a way that the rights of others are violated. The purpose of aggressive behavior is to humiliate, dominate or put the other person down, rather than to simply express one's honest emotions or thoughts. It is an attack on the other person rather than on the person's behavior. It is often an over-reaction or outburst.

After an increased understanding of the terms, comes the next task. That of defining "my rights as a human being." This is an important step in learning to become a more assertive person. It is difficult to assert your own rights if you are not very clear about rights you may personally claim.

The Assertive Bill of Rights has been a helpful tool, not only in discussion but also as "think" material. Here is that list. Begin to have a definite sense of your rights as a human being. Understand when your rights are being violated. You will also better understand when you may be violating the rights of another person. (You may have more to add.)

Assertive Bill of Rights

1. You have the right to what you desire as long as it doesn't hurt someone else.
2. You have the right to maintain dignity even if it does hurt someone else.
3. You have the right to make a request of another person as long as you realize the other person has a right to say no.
4. You must realize that there are certain borderline cases in interpersonal situations where the rights aren't clear. But you always have the right to clarify and discuss the problem with the person involved.
5. You have the right to be treated with respect.
6. You have the right to have and express your own feelings.
7. You have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.
8. You have the right to set your own priorities.
9. You have the right to say "no" without feeling guilty.
10. You have the right to ask for what you want.
11. You have the right to get what you pay for.
12. You have the right to ask for information from professionals.
13. You have the right to make mistakes.
14. You have the right to choose not to assert yourself.

The ability to function as a human being effectively and with enjoyment and satisfaction, depends on how well we can meet our own personal needs and on satisfying and honest relationships.

Assertive behavior increases the likelihood of both.

Sharon B. Molzen is County Extension Home Economist for the Harvey County Extension Office in Newton, Kan. She organizes and leads Women's Growth Groups and Assertiveness Training Workshops.

*Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there never had been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as "The women, God help us!" or "The ladies, God bless them"; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as He found them and was completely unself-conscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything "funny" about woman's nature.—Dorothy L. Sayers in an address, given to a Women's Society in 1938, entitled "Are Women Human?" Printed in *Eternity*, February 1974 by permission of Armitage Watkins, Inc., 1971, Eerdmans Publishing Company.*

Male/Female Differences in Perceptions of "Career"

by Colleen Stagner

Studies have shown that typically men behave in certain ways in regard to their careers, and traditionally women have behaved in entirely different ways.

What does it matter if men's and women's behavior patterns are different? Why is this of more significance today than it was in former years? Because for the first time in history over half of all persons gainfully employed are women—51 percent. In 1950 only 20 percent of employed persons were women. Employed women account for more than one half of all adult women. Six out of 10 married women are employed outside of their homes.

But do these women have to work? Do they need to concern themselves with a "career"? Why can't they stay at home? The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 1975 that of almost 34 million employed women over 5 million had husbands whose incomes were below \$7,000. In all, 18.5 million reported working for financial reasons. Today, there are 42 million women in the work force, and with spiraling inflation rates no doubt the majority of these would state that they are working for financial reasons. Of these 42 million women, 7.7 million are listed as heads of households. In fact, the number of female-headed families has increased by over 250 percent since 1950.

With these statistics, why then do some women still give so little thought to setting career goals? What are some of the reasons why women have not been gung-ho about their careers? Here are five reasons.

1. Women still perceive their first duties as being to others. Women realize, and studies continue to bear this out, that household chores they have traditionally handled, may still fall to them exclusively or predominantly. Many women cope with extreme feelings of guilt if the needs of others are not met. Does a woman seriously considering an occupation or profession believe she will have the time and energy for necessary training for advancement responsibilities, and for the family she has or hopes to have?

Drs. Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim conducted a study of 25 women who made it to top management and reported on their findings in the book *The Managerial Woman*. Of these 25 women, none married until they were at least 35 years of age. Each of them at about the age of 25, had made a conscious decision to postpone this commitment. Half of them never married. Do most men have to make this choice if they wish to reach the top?

2. Women do not generally think in terms of working a lifetime. However, even if a woman stays home until her children are through high school, she easily may have 20 years of productive work after rearing her children. This is not the best time to begin career planning but many women wait until the last child has left the home to consider what they want to do with the

rest of their lives.

Author Rona Jaffe, after writing her latest novel *Class Reunion*, conducted a survey of women who graduated from Radcliffe during the years she attended there—1951-1954. She mailed 1,000 questionnaires and received 200 responses. The first question on the questionnaire was "What were your hopes, dreams, and expectations when you graduated from college, in terms of work, love, and family life?"

The answers which came back were essentially the same. It should be pointed out that Radcliffe, which is now Harvard/Radcliffe, is where the best and the brightest women were graduated—only one in seven applicants were accepted during this period. Paraphrased, the responses were typically: "I wanted to marry the most wonderful man, have beautiful, brilliant children and live happily ever after—and maybe teach." "In the 1950s a paid job was only something you did until real life came along." A large number of replies stated: "I expected to find my identity through my husband."

The second question on the questionnaire was: "Did you get what you wanted and expected from work, love, and family life?" Here is where the real stories began, as Rona Jaffe personally interviewed 100 of the women who had responded from across the country. In some instances Mr. Right had jumped onto his aging white charger and rode away to marry the "other" woman. In other cases, the women were now widowed and belatedly embarking upon careers.

Jaffe, who places some blame on professors and deans who discouraged career ambitions, sums up her report: "In the 1950s, when we were much younger than we thought we were, we accepted the rules and thought there were no choices. Now we have learned to make our own choices—even our own rules. We are not Pollyannas. There is some rage for having been betrayed by the men and institutions we loved and trusted. But we have gone beyond the rage and we like ourselves. The world changed. We changed with it and are still changing."

3. Women have been socialized to believe they are not as bright as men. Beyond that, if by some chance they are able to believe they are right, they go to extreme lengths in adolescent years to conceal the fact!

Rosalyn Yallow, radio-physiologist and 1977 winner of the Nobel Prize in medicine states: "We still live in a world in which a significant fraction of people, including women, believe that a woman belongs and wants to belong exclusively in the home....The world cannot afford the loss of the talents of half its people if we are to solve the many problems which beset us."

Margaret Mead, the late anthropologist, also said in 1977: "We need to rid ourselves of the stereotypes that either men or women have exclusive ability to perform

some roles. Women may be a little better at rearing children, men may be a little better physicists—but we don't know, because we haven't let either sex try these many different roles...We must give both sexes the training and the chance to do all things. We can't possibly lose by giving every person a chance to be what they are."

4. Women have not had successful role models in the past to emulate as men have had, at least not in great numbers nor in every profession. In fact, some women still have a problem accepting a woman in leadership roles.

5. Women have been reluctant to be labelled "ambitious" or "aggressive." These are favorable adjectives when applied to men, but are they for women? Women also have shied away from seeking "power," "money," or "recognition."

After women have decided upon a career or occupation, how do they differ from men in the ways they view their jobs and advancement up the ladder? Hennig & Jardim, authors of *The Managerial Woman*, found differences there also. In a study of over 3,000 women and more than 2,000 men, it was discovered that:

1. When things go wrong, men usually blame the boss, the business climate, the circumstances. Women tend to blame themselves.

2. Men assume they are competent and set out to see that somebody important finds out about it. Women fear they are not yet good enough and so spend more time on self-improvement.

Janet Jones-Parker and Anne Hyde, who run a highly successful executive search service, relate this story: "During a top search we were working with a woman—highly qualified, with a track record and in the \$70,000 a year salary bracket. At the end of the days' interviewing, the client said that two things had struck him very forcibly about the woman—and about all of the women he had screened! Each had stated or implied some self-doubt. Each felt she was not up to the challenge. If he had interviewed men with the same credentials, every one of them would have taken the bit between his teeth and run. The client's interpretation: He said he was seeing the results of discrimination over a long period of time. That if you are told constantly

that you cannot, you must not, you should not, chances are you will not."

3. Men take risks to get what they want. Women are more likely to play it safe.

4. Men see work as a series of tasks to be completed, all adding up to something. Women often look at a job as an endless stream of work, with no beginning middle, or end.

5. Men set priorities. Women try to do everything equally well.

6. Men plan ahead. Women concentrate on the present. Newly-appointed women supervisors frequently have the problem of being overly concerned with the nitty gritty details of the moment. Might this not stem from the fact that traditionally women have handled detail work?

7. Men decide on a goal and go for it. Women wait to be chosen. Many women believe fiercely in the element of luck and frequently will explain a promotion with: "I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time."

8. For men, a job and a career are part of the same thing. For women, a job means making a living and a career is "finding happiness." Does that remind us of the Radcliffe graduates?

Some have questioned whether men may go too far in equating their work with their identity. Harvey Kaye, in *Male Survival*, raises the specter of the physical and mental toll the masculine mystique has exacted. To work is noble, he emphasizes, but to stake one's moral worth and whole sense of being on one's work has proved to be a physical and psychological catastrophe. Herb Goldberg in *The Hazards of Being Male* stresses the heavy burden society has placed on men by making them believe that each should be a super achiever and continue to climb ever upward.

Could it be that each of the sexes can learn from the other? Can men learn that there are values outside of work? And can women tune in to the value of being competent, even successful?!

Colleen Stagner is director of seminars and workshops for Growth Associates, a division of Prairie View Inc., Newton, Kan. The article is part of a paper she presented at a women's conference in Wichita

An Interview with Tina Block Ediger

by Carole Hull

Tina Block Ediger has been working for the Commission on Overseas Mission for 25 years. In her capacity as Director of Mission Services, she has responsibility for promoting missions in the churches, organizing deputation schedules for missionaries in Canada and the U.S., and producing mission-related literature. Her work in the church leading to this position has been an interesting journey, with both arduous and rewarding twists and turns. She will be presenting a workshop, Women Learning Leadership

Skills at the next Women in Ministry Conference to be held in Kansas next March. This conversation took place recently in her office.

Carole Hull: In what capacity did you begin your work for COM 25 years ago?

Tina Block Ediger: I came as a secretary from Winnipeg. Two of my roommates were contemplating mission service work: Susan Martens Kehler was getting to work as a single person, and another was

preparing for MCC work in Korea. This caused me to reflect on my gifts and how I could best serve, and I came to the missions office in Newton. The work as secretary was a calling, not a job; I soon felt this to be where I could joyfully serve.

CH: What kind of atmosphere or attitude was prevalent at that time?

TBE: The attitude was one of total acceptance from co-workers. My predecessor in this job, Wilhelmina Kuyf, was a wonderful role model. Forfeiting marriage, she had been a missionary in China and had a fulfilling life. She had a great influence on me. While working here I saw the need to get a college education, which I did on and off from 1957 until 1965, interrupted by two years of service in India. My goal was to further my opportunities in this job through education and experience. Even first-hand knowledge of finance in missions came when I was transferred from the secretarial desk to the bookkeeper's desk for a time.

CH: How did your work continue in focus and emphasis?

TBE: My term in India was in preparation for taking over as administrative assistant because Miss Kuyf was getting on in years. Those two years were among the best of my life. I was game for anything—adventure, work, learning to know the people, travel in my time off. All this gave me a wider perspective. On the way back, the mission board asked me to visit Taiwan and Japan as part of my orientation. From 1965 to 1971 I served as administrative assistant, and from 1971 until the present as Director of Mission Services. Field trips included Colombia in 1969, Zaire in 1971 (sponsored by Women in Mission), Mexico in 1974, Asia in 1979 (See News/Verbs in this *Report*). As part of the delegation work in Zaire, I prepared a research paper on the role of the single missionary woman in that country. All these trips have been an invaluable help to get to know our missionaries and to understand the work.

CH: As you recognized your gifts for leadership, how were these affirmed and nurtured or resisted by colleagues?

TBE: There was affirmation and nurture in the office. My work was a challenge; there was understanding among colleagues, and friendships emerged. It's a credit to Howard Habegger that he let me use my gifts, sought my opinions, and challenged me to greater opportunities. I have a professional relationship with the men in the office where a mutual give-and-take is part of staff meetings; we see each person as an essential part of a team. As far as the churches are concerned, I've been invited many times to share, and have deep satisfaction in getting a message across. Some churches invite me to give the sermon, others call what I bring "messages." The only time I have difficulty in the pulpit is when I can't see over the top of it!

CH: What do you see as major stumbling blocks for women to be recognized as full persons with men in the church today?

TBE: Women's attitudes can be a problem. We should

be neither abrasive nor mousy, neither deceptively charming nor manipulative. Is it possible to be non-threatening to men to use the gifts God has given us, so that all—men *and* women—can exercise their abilities in the church? More openness from men is needed, too. If, for example, a woman has the gift of preaching a man should be able to say, "Take this gift and use it!" Men need to be liberated to see us as whole human beings.

CH: What steps can one take to emerge a confident, capable person with responsibility for policy-making decisions in the church?

TBE: Such a person must be willing to do more than is asked, to be unselfish, to work hard at small and unglamorous tasks, to be responsible on the job, to prove oneself trustworthy, to be able to live with pressures. As regards policies, she must be able to live with the decisions she makes and risk her neck for changes that are necessary to church growth. Perseverance is the key. This person should have the confidence that God has called her, and will provide the strength she needs when things get rough. Last, but not least, she should be able to laugh at herself and at the ridiculous situations she finds herself in.

CH: Is proper understanding of the Bible going to open minds to women's participation in all ministries?

TBE: This is what I think and believe: God knew who we were long before we were born, and makes no distinction between male and female. We are all part of God's plan. Both sexes essential; one is not over the other. Did God create women only to serve men? I feel He has a purpose for each one of us, not based on sex, to do His work here.

CH: What is your vision for the future regarding men and women working together in the church?

TBE: That the church will allow women to work to their full capacity as they want to and have the gifts to. Some women have the gifts and don't want to use them, while others may have them but are not challenged to use them. A single woman has to get into the mainstream of society and make a life for herself. I am grateful to God that my journey was "solo" for a long time (until 1975) so I could fashion my identity around this job.

CH: Once we no longer have to struggle to prove ourselves, how would you prioritize the top concerns men and women must address to the church and world?

TBE: Social injustice. An awareness of people who are hurting in our own community and beyond. Affluence and lifestyles. Do we really believe that everyone has the right to hear the Gospel, and if so, how are we making that possible? Do we live what we believe about the centrality of Christ in our lives. Are we concerned for women's and other minorities' rights?

CH: Your statement at General Conference was moving, opportune, and inspired. Could you repeat it for us here?

TBE: Yes. "Campolo (featured speaker) challenged us

to use our minds and gifts in God's service. Many of our women have offered their gifts for service overseas, through MCC, Commission on Overseas Mission, and other organizations. If we can support these women overseas, and they are acceptable for service there, why are they not qualified here? One third of the students at seminary are women. What kind of opportunities for service will they have? I would like to see more women

on the nominating slate for conference boards. God gave us gifts. We want to help. Will you allow us to serve?

CH: Tina, you've given us much to think about. Thank you, dear sister!

Carole Hull, 518 E. 4th, Newton, Kan., is active in the Newton Hospice organization and is on the 1981 Women in Ministry program committee.

Nine out of ten women now in school will be employed in the future. Most women will spend 25 years or more at paid employment, even if they marry and take time off from work to raise children. In 1973, 45 percent of all American women worked and 42.9 percent of these women had children under 18 years of age—From U.S. Department of Labor

A Career Made Possible by a Supportive Spouse

by Shirley Sprunger King

As far back as I can remember, I have very good memories of my mother and father and especially the way in which they related to each other. My mother was an intelligent woman and an excellent teacher. My father always respected her and I experienced the warmth and appreciation they shared with each other. Later when I started thinking about marriage, I found those memories influenced me greatly when I envisioned a good and healthy marriage.

Since the beginning of our marriage in 1969, Vern has encouraged me to pursue my interests and activities as a musician. We have shared household work and parenting; for the past three years he has been the primary parent during the school year to our five and seven year old sons. It is because of this arrangement and understanding that it has been possible for me to become active again in my career.

Although the music world is very competitive, it has been my experience that the competition, for the most part, is based on an individual's skills and competency rather than being male or female. Yet few young women with families can find the time and energy needed to maintain the time-consuming schedule for necessary practicing.

Since coming to Kansas in 1977, I have tried to combine teaching with performing. The role of generating excitement in young musicians and helping them communicate musically has been a challenging one. Before teaching at Bethel College, I found that my primary communication was in the music I performed. Performance remains a major investment because it keeps me aware of the problems of the articulate musician and provides a laboratory for dealing with specific areas of technique, concentration, and stylistic interpretation. However, the demands of practicing, rehearsals, and performances are not ideal for a young family, and would be difficult to maintain without an understanding and supportive spouse. We believe the advantages that our arrangement offers our family outweigh the difficulties of scheduling.

Shirley Sprunger King received her musical training at Bluffton College and the University of Cincinnati. She has held numerous church organ positions, is assistant professor of organ at Bethel College, a member of the Faculty Trio, organist-harpsichordist for the Wichita Symphony Orchestra, and organist at the Bethel College Mennonite Church. She is a past dean of the Wichita chapter of American Guild of Organists.

Mennonite Feminists Find Each Other

by Sharon K. Heath

I am not an ethnic Mennonite; I came by way of Mennonite Voluntary Service. I joined MVS in October 1979; I joined my local Mennonite church (Arvada, Col.) on Easter of this year. So the triennial sessions at Estes Park this past summer was my first experience with the General Conference Mennonite Church as a whole.

During the first day and a half of the Triennial Conference, women were conspicuously absent from the platform and podium; sexist language was consistently used by the male leaders (there were no female leaders); the topics of the workshops as announced beforehand dealt only in a token way with feminist issues; most workshops were led by men or by husband/

wife teams.

So I was somewhat skeptical as I made my way, with three other women, to the Monday afternoon workshop on "Feminists in the Church." One of the women remarked that we four might be the only ones at the workshop. You can, then, imagine my surprise and delight when we found almost 70 women wedged into a room designed for 30!

The issues were many; the workshop discussion was lively; it was good to meet and talk to women of all ages who were concerned about the same issues that concern me. After the workshop, several of us stayed behind to talk about the issues of power, especially as

they related to this triennial conference. Could we affect the leadership of the General Conference by somehow increasing the number of qualified women in top leadership positions?

That afternoon an *ad hoc* committee was born. Our purpose was to find qualified women for positions of leadership whose names we could place in nomination from the floor. Elections were to be Wednesday morning we had to move fast if we were to find qualified women who would be willing to run for office. Excitement began to build as we felt we were really doing something positive toward gaining more leadership from women. And even if we weren't successful (we honestly didn't think we would be) in getting a woman elected, at least we would gain visibility.

Excitement ran high as we contacted women to be nominated, and contacted men and women to do the nominating. Some agreed; some refused. By Tuesday afternoon the pressure was on; we had a list of four women who had agreed to be nominated for each of four positions¹ and four people to place their names in nomination from the floor. (We felt the nominators were as important to the process as the nominees themselves.)

Tina Block Ediger made a brief, eloquent statement to the whole assembly, noting the lack of women in leadership roles in spite of the abundance of women qualified for those positions. Position by position "our women" were placed in nomination. Anna Juhnke and Marge Ediger were elected outright; Carol Suter and Anne Falk were elected in run-off votes. Our committee, which had had, we felt, no real chance for success, had been 100 percent successful!

The *ad hoc* committee had been successful in these two ventures. We had gotten several good women elected to leadership position who never would have been there otherwise; and we had gotten the General Conference to approve a policy statement that will see more and more women actively recruited for leadership roles. But we felt we had more work to do; we channeled ourselves into a long-term organization: the "General Conference Mennonite Women's Caucus."

The Mennonite Women's Caucus will seek to bring together feminists in the General Conference on the district level, as well as around specific conference-wide issues. Each district in the U.S. has a local coordinator, as does the Canadian Conference. Beth Goering Tanner was chosen binational coordinator.

The conference-wide issues which the Caucus will address over the next triennium revolve around social concerns, leadership and political action within the General Conference, and consciousness-raising. These

issues will be addressed through the work of three Task Forces.

The Social Action Task Force will deal primarily with issues of social concern: How can the General Conference begin to meet the needs of low-income women, both inside and outside the General Conference? How can the Abortion Statement be implemented so as to address the problems facing low-income and/or single-parent families?

The Political Action Task Force will monitor and advise the General Board as it begins to implement our resolution. It will search out qualified women, as well as finding out how the internal political system of the General Conference can be used to assist women into positions of leadership.

The Consciousness-Raising Task Force has perhaps the hardest job of all: to make "feminist" a respected word within the General Conference. They will do this by means of Bible studies, as well as by working through and coordinating with existing church structures, such as Women in Mission. They will work as liaison with existing women's groups.

The week of the triennial sessions was indeed an exciting one. We came together, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, to encourage each other, to call each other to exercise our gifts of leadership, and to form a network within the General Conference which will deal with major issues on a long-term basis.

I believe that if we had not taken the opportunity, it would have been a long time before the gifts of all its members would be recognized by the General Conference Mennonite Church, and in that time many Mennonite feminists would be lost to the church. As Karen Flueckiger of Berne, Ind., said, "This group (the Women's Caucus) can help to support and encourage women to serve the church and the world through the exercising of their God-given gifts."

All feminists, female or male, are invited to contact their local coordinator for more information, to join a task force, or to contact Beth Goering Tanner, 2018 Park Place, Wichita, Kan., 67203, tel. (316) 263-2362.

¹Anna Juhnke for General Board; Carol Suter for Division of Administration; Marge Ediger for Seminary Board; and Anne Falk for Commission on Overseas Missions.

²District coordinators are Luanna Enns, Nutana Park Church, Saskatoon, Sask., Canadian Conference; Carol Suter, Grace Church, Pandora, Ohio, Central District; Sharon Heath, Arvada Church, Arvada, Col., Western District; and Judy Kagele, Menno Church, Ritzville, Wash., Pacific District. We still need coordinators for the Northern and Eastern Districts—any takers?

Sharon Heath, 8700 W. 63rd Pl., Arvada, Col., 80004, is a Mennonite Voluntary Service worker in Arvada, Col.

Resources

Assertiveness

Patricia Jakabowski-Spector, *An Introduction to Assertiveness Training Procedures for Women* (Washington, D.C.: American Personnel and Guidance Assoc., 1973).

Stanlee Phelps and Nancy Austin, *The Assertive Woman*, (Impact Publishers, 1975).

Stories of Leaders

Mary Lou Cummings, *Full Circle, Stories of Mennonite Women* (Faith and Life Press, 1978).

Katie Funk Wiebe, *Women Among the Brethren*, (Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Hillsboro, Kan., 1979).

Gladys V. Goering, *Women in Search of Mission*, (Faith and Life Press, 1980).

An Interpretive Account of the 1980 Evangelical Women's Caucus

by Bertha Beachy

"Reconciliation means a thorough change from worldly standards in the kingdom of death to the kingdom of the new creation," declared well-known author and professor Virginia Mollenkott in her keynote address to the June 1980 Evangelical Women's Caucus meeting in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. The theme of the conference, based on II Cor. 5:18-19 R.S.V., centered around women in reconciliation.

Dr. Mollenkott urged evangelical women to work for peace in the world. Christian love will bring word and deed together in doing justice. She traced the pattern of the rising right-wing evangelicals who advocate male supremacy in the home, the death penalty, lifestyles that exploit people and rape the land, unlimited capitalism which then requires nuclear power and military might to protect the interests of the rich.

Mutuality in the home, on the other hand, leads to mutuality in our communities, nation and around the world. Equal respect for every person regardless of wealth, sex, color, ability, or faith is the call for all Christians. We must work to empower the powerless. Injustice remains as long as one person remains hungry. This work for justice she believes to be the true biblical work of the Holy Spirit. She urged the 400 to 500 women and men attending to name their enemies and then do loving justice towards them. She encouraged biblical feminists to build bridges to all the unreconciled elements in this world.

Dr. Mollenkott suspects that the exclusive language of most evangelicals has too long kept women from their rightful place as made in the image of God. Most women tremble when naming God other than Father. She urged the group not to violate Scripture but to pay closer attention to the text. More inclusive language should help evangelical women to be reconciled with their deepest selves, and thus rejoice that God loves all equally—including "her" also.

The next morning black South African Christian, Motlalepula Chabaku, a 1979 graduate of Lancaster (Pa) Theological Seminary, echoed the same concern of seeing all people as made in image of God. Though she is voiceless, voteless, and landless in her homeland because of white Christian male supremacy, she completely rejects revenge. Instead she challenged women to recognize the great power and responsibility that God has given to them. Women must reject consumerism which is brought about by advertising in the American media. This rejection could reduce the exploitation of her own people in South Africa. Women in North America must see the inter-relatedness of the two and refuse to be pawns. In spite of great suffering in the past and presently, she declared that "Every human being is a part of my life and I am a part of everyone."

Susan B. Anthony II, author, lecturer, Roman Catholic theologian, and counselor, spoke about the "inner light" that had directed her Quaker great aunt Susan B. Anthony in the suffrage movement. Her Aunt Susan

had worked as both a mystic and a prophetess who believed that "with God nothing will be impossible."

Sharing the evening was 91-year-old Victoria Booth Demarest who had preached for the past 71 years of her life. She has continued in the tradition of her grandmother, Catherine Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army and preacher from 1860-1885. Standing tall and erect, Victoria who is sometimes known as "the Grand Dame of Evangelicals" encouraged women to use their gifts in ministry in the church. She firmly believes that the call of God within is more important than the ordination of people without. She confessed to experiencing God's greatest favor while preaching or giving birth to each of her six children. She challenged women to respect men, but to also cherish the call of God.

Ken Medema, blind singer, pianist, and composer, poignantly set the tone of the conference in his Wednesday evening concert. He had obviously risen above his suffering communicating compassion and joy. This special quality united the conference with hope for the future.

A group of women artists from Toronto led a lively multi-media concert on Friday evening. Using slides, song, instruments, narration, and dance they portrayed the life of woman as it flows and ebbs through various tides. Startling to many was the song "God our Mother."

Marchiene Rienstra, pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Port Sheldon, Mich., followed the concert with a sermon on "God's Paradigm for Women." She traced how the media presents false standards for women. Often the church also wants "dolled up" women, superhuman volunteers, but not persons with gifts and a calling from God. Rev. Rienstra pointed to three biblical women whose lives offer worthy direction to today's woman. Deborah was the spokeswoman who rescued but did not attempt to control God's people. Mary the mother of Jesus was the reflective handmaiden of the Lord. Priscilla as a partner with her husband helped to turn the world upside down.

Communion led by Nancy Hardesty. Shared readings—a great affirmation of personhood—became precious as we reflected on our potential. Many of us were moved to tears as we received "the cup of suffering of the shed blood of Jesus, for you my sister."

Forty-seven workshops were held on a wide variety of subjects: reconciliation with God, with ourselves, with others, between the sexes, with the environment, with the past and with the world and its needs. Perry and Elizabeth Yoder from Bethel College led one on "Men and Masculinity in the Kingdom of God."

A late Friday night session brought together more than 15 Mennonites coming from California to Virginia. We determined to go home and tell: men and women together are made in the image of God. Too many Mennonites have not yet received that good news

from the Gospel!

Saturday morning was spent reflecting on the past, sharing the present pilgrimage, and charting the future course of EWC. An invitation to hold the 1982 convention in Seattle, Washington, was accepted.

One chapter reported on the findings on discriminations against women in Bible schools and institutes. It was sparked by Stan and Pat Gundry's experience at Moody Bible Institute. The group was reminded that an original purpose of Moody's was to work toward ordination of women. Another offered to help educate evangelical women to work for change in political structures at a state and national level.

All remained convinced that the work of evangelical women has just begun. The need continues for women to lovingly work with all so that together we share the freedom that Christ brought. True reconciliation must reach all humankind wherever there is injustice.

Bertha Beachy is a member of the MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society and attended the Evangelical Women's Caucus at the request of the task force. A missionary for many years, she now manages the Provident Bookstore in Goshen, Ind.

Reviews

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Policy Branch, has produced a series of documents entitled "Integration of Women in Development." Each fact sheet contains a section on the known statistics regarding women and development (e.g. demographic data, vital statistics, economic data, social indicators) and bibliographic data (publications, groups, etc.). They vary in size from seven to 75 pages. The countries available are Botswana, Zaire, Honduras, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Zambia. Contact CIDA, Policy Branch, Division of Cooperation and Coordination, Ottawa, Ont.

Smith, Betsy Covington, *Ordained Women*. Smith, an Episcopalian Christian, interviews an ecumenical cross section of ordained women (among whom are Jeannette Picard, an unnamed nun, Rabbi Susan Sasso) and draws some conclusions: women are being ordained, but men continue to get the (pulpit) jobs; on the other hand, women tend to like their counseling/nurturing jobs. (Review heard on radio KUCV, Lincoln, Neb. Title not yet in *Books in Print*. mts)

Goering Gladys V. *Women in Search of Mission*. Faith and Life Press, 1980. Reviewed by Lois Deckert, Box 475, North Newton, Kan. When people have goals they think are important, it is difficult to stop them from realizing those goals. The women of the General Conference Mennonite Church are no exception. Not only are they women in search of mission, they are women with a mission as is evident in this book. Gladys Goering has with humor and sensitivity recorded the history of the women's organization from its inauspicious beginnings to the present. The organization grew despite

very little recognition from the conference in the early years. Though a strong support group for missionaries, the organization did not receive much status from the mission board for many years. With all the ignoring and non-recognition it probably should have disappeared, but the sense of mission would not allow this. *Women in Search of Mission* records growth and change, until now the organization is involved in the total work of the conference. You will chuckle as you read of the early meetings. Gladys relates triumphs, but does not leave out the struggles and disappointments. People and events come alive. This is a history worth reading.

Dyck, Anna Reimer, translated and edited by Peter J. Klassen. *Anna: From the Caucasus to Canada*. Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, Hillsboro, Kan., 1979. 216 pp. \$8.95 paper, \$10.95 cloth. From respected landowner's daughter to fleeing Russian refugee, Anna Reimer Dyck's life is a gripping story of glory and tragedy, of hope and despair, and of restored hope in a distant land. Here is an example of faith and endurance triumphing over adversity.

A Scream from Silence (Mourir a tue-tete) by filmmaker Anne Claire Poirier has now been released for showing in English Canada and the U.S. after successful runs in Quebec. In Ontario it survived the censor's scissors intact. *A Scream from Silence* is a National Film Board production and is released in Canada by New World Mutual Pictures of Canada. (In the U.S. the title is *Primal Fear*.) The film has been endorsed by Toronto's Rape Crisis Centre.

Erlbeck, Ruth. *Frauen in Indien*. Munster: Verlag Frauenpolitik, 1978, 160 pp. Erlbeck's main thesis is "that for the women of the lower classes the progressive imposition of capitalism means an increasing impoverishment. In Part I she briefly shows the differences between women in the developing countries and women in western industrial...in the next part she focuses on the historical dimension of India, examining the pre-colonial periods and the Asian mode of production... (and) the emergence of the purdah system." Part II explores women's work in India, focusing on lower class and scheduled caste women. Women are shown to be lower paid than men, and restricted to stagnant sectors of the economy. The highest percentage of women agricultural workers as well as workers in road construction, quarry work, and dung removal are from the scheduled castes. In Part IV Erlbeck claims that the laws enacted have been ineffective and says that women must become politically active. (From C. Donner-Reichle's review in *Isis, International Bulletin*, also published in *Resources for Feminist Research*, March 1980.)

Correction: The identification of Ethel Yake Metzler in the May-June Report was not completely accurate. She does some private practice, but her full-time work is with the Family Counseling Service of Elkhart, Ind., where she is a therapist and also co-director of a new program dealing with incest, plus providing consultation and education on sexuality.

news and verbs

Aiko Tanase, Obihiro, Japan, became the first woman elected to the executive committee of the 16-congregation Japan Mennonite Church conference in April 1980.

Mary Herr, Phoeniz, Ariz., and her daughter *Ellen Herr*, Hillsboro, Kan., led the Western District women's retreat in May on the subject of keeping a spiritual journal. Western District Women in Mission sponsored the retreat.

Elaine Sommers Rich, Bluffton, Ohio, has been chosen to be editor-writer of *Mennonite Women—A Story of Faithfulness 1683-1983*. Project of the Women's Missionary and Service Commission.

Asia Alderson Bennett, Swarthmore, Pa., is the new chief executive director of the American Friends Service Committee.

Barbara Claassen Smucker's book *Days of Terror* (Clark, Irwin, and Company, Toronto and Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa.) has been named the best Canadian book for children in 1979 by the Canada Council. (This is comparable to the Newberry Award in the U.S.)

Elizabeth Ratzlaff, Evangelical Mennonite Brethren missionary, has been named "Woman of the Year" by the governor of Aruba, Netherlands Antilles.—From *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

Tina Block Ediger represented the (General Conference Mennonite) Commission on Overseas Mission in a two-month visitation to mission work in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and India last autumn. She was accompanied by her husband Elmer.

Mennonite World Conference executive plans to invite about 45 women to Nairobi in July 1981 to attend the MWC General Council.

Margaretha Ediger, copastor of the Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Ill., was ordained June 22. She is a graduate of Mennonite Biblical Seminary and has served as a chaplain and as a group-home mother to disturbed teenagers. She and her husband Menno have served the Markham Church for two years.—From *The Mennonite*, 19 August 1980.

Kristina Ediger, Mennonite Central Committee worker, was sent to Mirrote, Mozambique, by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to start a

TAKE A SHORT COURSE AT THE SEMINARY THIS JANUARY

Among the interterm offerings at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 5-23 January 1981, is "Women in Church and Society." Dorothy Yoder Nyce is the lead teacher. Consider a three-week stint in the classroom, away from routine duties of job, family, and home congregation. You can expect to return to these more responsibly.

The course, structured within the seminaries' history-theology department, will examine influences

physical therapy program for 560 handicapped people and train people to continue it.—From MCC News Service.

Amanda Friesen's teaching of children in the church (Gospel Mennonite, Mountain Lake, Minn.) dates back at least as far as 1936, and she is still going strong inspite of her being a victim of progressive arthritis. Now her four sixth graders gather weekly around her bed, and (says Amanda) the attendance record is perfect.—From the *Northern Light*.

Betty Cole works with the American Friends Service Committee's bookstore and library of literature on war, peace, and nonviolent alternatives. Rap sessions for draft age people, outreach to schools and youth groups, and training for counselors are also offered. Contact: 980 N. Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena, Calif., 91103, tel. (213) 791-1978.

Georgia Sommer Linscheid was honored as Woman of the Year by the Reedley, Calif., Chamber of Commerce for "her efforts in helping others in the community and those from other countries." She is coordinating the placement of Kampuchean refugees for First Mennonite Church.—From *Bluffton College Scope*.

Dottie Janzen, Marie Snyder, and Emma Richards will be speakers and leaders at the Women in Ministry Conference at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., in March 1981. For further information, write Rosie Epp, 654 S. Chautauqua, Wichita, Kan., 67211.

James C. and Anna Kreider Juhnke will be speakers at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (Winnipeg) missions conference, 31 October to 2 November 1980.

The Ministerial Committee of the Western District Conference (General Conference Mennonite) sponsored a workshop on the ordination of women at the July triennial sessions. Given twice, the workshop consisted of a) scriptural input, pro and con; b) words from a person experiencing a woman in leadership; and c) words from an ordained woman. The purpose was to look at leadership/ordination of women in the church as interpreted through Scripture, experience, and the discernment of gifts.

When you come across news and verbs that you would like to share with the other 1,300 readers of this *Report*, send them to me at 4830 Woodland Ave., Lincoln, Neb., 68516.—*Muriel Thiessen Stackley*

on our perceptions; biblical affirmations of women; individuals worthy of being our mentors; national and international organizations of women; societal factors of home, work, health, and worship. The class will gather data, create liturgy, read biographies and current sources, and integrate feelings and learnings. Give serious thought and prayer to the possibility that this is for you. For further information about lodging, cost, credit, etc., write to Jerry Lind, Admissions, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, Ind., 46517.

Letters

What a treat to read *Report* #31. As I read I just keep on saying Yes, Yes, Yes. I have just returned from a Clinical Pastoral Education experience in a Springhill, Nova Scotia prison where I struggled painfully with a number of issues that Ethel Metzler and Walter Drudge opened up.... I must go beyond "I am just a child; I do not have the words" and enter the deep places of living and dying in myself and as a support to others.—*Anita Buller, Winnipeg (7 July)*.

I'm trying to focus in on a problem for an assignment in my Research Theory class and want to do something about Mennonite women. It's been helpful to look through my file of *Reports* to get some ideas. Thanks.—*Vel Shearer, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. (16 September)*.

Thanks for sending *Report*. I am glad to be a part of a church family who is taking a close look at women and their role in the 80s.—*Gerry Schrock, Eureka, Ill (23 September)*.

Dear Sisters: Again I write to express my appreciation to the Task Force for raising and confronting problems faced by women. The issue on Women and Depression, although it focuses on Mennonite women, is relevant for all women in our society. Thank you for the insights reflected and skills outlined to work with women who are caught in hopeless and helpless feelings. We are now beginning to understand that these problems, which we have so long considered to be the result of our individual failings, are brought about by factors over which we have no control—until we begin to recognize and understand them. With increased awareness comes the power to take action individually and together. We are learning how to change what must be changed. *Report* is doing much to provide a forum where women can share their experience, increase awareness, and form links to reclaim their personhood.—*Donnie Patterson, Gibsons, B.C. (27 July)*.

The *Report* is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

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(Reported at the request of the editor)

I led a workshop at Estes Park (General Conference Mennonite triennial sessions) based on the assumption that Christian/Mennonite feminists need a chance to simply talk to each other, assess their past experiences in the church, and strategize for the future. Over 60 persons (including three men) shared and energized each other to develop a support network, to become more assertive in conference/church policy-making decisions, and to become more studious in our personal lives, pursuing scholarly work and spiritual strengthening.—*Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Kansas City, Kan. (10 September)*.

Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* will focus on:

Women in Mennonite Business/Industry. November-December 1980. Mary Dueck, coordinator.

Women and Militarism. January-February 1981. Winifred Beechy and Janet Umble Reedy, coordinators.

Mentors and Role Models for Mennonite Women. March-April 1981. Katie Funk Wiebe, coordinator.

Mennonite Women Writers. May-June 1981. Elsa Redekopp, coordinator.

Are you aware of written or audio-visual resources on these topics? We would like to recommend them in *Report*. Have you (or do you know someone who has) been researching or writing on these topics? Someone who is particularly interested in them? Put us in touch with such people. What actions have been taken in these areas in your community or in your congregation?

Send all information to Editor, *Report*, 4830 Woodland Ave., Lincoln, Neb., 68516.

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